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POEMS

THE
COMFORT OF THE HILLS
AND OTHER POEMS

BY

S. WEIR MITCHELL, M.D., LL.D.



NEW YORK
THE CENTURY CO.
1910

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In Memoriam

SARAH BUTLER WISTER

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PREFACE

IN the year 1882 I printed the first of six small volumes of verse. The editions of each were limited to two or three hundred copies, with an average sale of about fifty copies. Having generously given away the rest, I am amused to find that these volumes are now sought for by the collector of first editions and are occasionally bringing absurd prices.

This present collection is the only one I have not paid for outright and is a venture of my publishers which speaks well for their courage.

The three poems at the beginning of this volume lay for many years in my portfolios. "The Comfort of the Hills" is now publicly printed for the first time.

PREFACE

The two odes have appeared in *The Century Magazine*; "On a Lycian Tomb" was first printed in the selection of my poems published at my expense by Macmillan in London.

This volume had a still more brilliant success than its predecessors in America. In all, eighteen copies sold in the first year and, so far as I know, none since. Two years later I was asked to say what was to be done with the remaining volumes. Unfortunately, the English publishers had placed in them a statement that the book was copyrighted in America. This was true only as to a part of its contents, but it absolutely prevented the exportation to this country. Accordingly, I desired Mr. Macmillan to burn the rest of the volumes or to consign them afresh to the paper-mill to serve for reincarnation of the poems in some more fortunate form. I asked also that fifty bound copies be

PREFACE

sent to America. They were promptly stopped in the New York Custom-House. A book said to be copyrighted in America, printed in England, returned to America, the law forbids to enter. I asked what should be done with them. Might I buy them? I could not. I believe it was finally concluded to cremate them. This history of the freaks of the copyright and the adventures of a book may not be without interest.

S. WEIR MITCHELL.

December 10, 1909.

POEMS

THE COMFORT OF THE HILLS

Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the
chief things of the ancient mountains, and
for the precious things of the lasting hills.

HERE have I wandered oft these many years
Far from the world's restraint, my heart at ease,
With equal liberty of joy or tears
To welcome Nature's generousities,
Where these gray summits give the unburdened
mind
To clearer thought, in freedom unconfined.

What made this wide estate of hill and plain
So surely mine to-day? Of God, the law
That gave to joy the right of ampler reign—

For in love's title none may find a flaw,
And mine the equities of tribute brought
From vassal lands no earthly gold has bought.

* * *

As flit gray gulls, with silver flash of wings,
Leap and are lost the whitecaps of the sea
When swoops the norther o'er the deep and sings
Mad music in the hemlocks, and for me
A litany of joy and hope and praise,
Sweet to the man who knows laborious days.

The wild hawk here is playmate of my thought.
Like him I soar, upon as eager wings,
And something of his liberty have caught,
The simple pleasure in material things,

Unvexed, in thoughtless joy a child to be,
The moment's friend of all the eye can see.

Kind to the dreamer is this solitude.
Fair courtesies of silence wait to know
What hopes are flattering a poet mood,
Stirred by frail ecstasies that come and go,
Like birds that let the quivering leaves prolong
The broken music of their passing song.

Here may we choose what company shall be ours;
Here bend before one fair divinity
To whose dear feet we bring the spirit-flowers,
Fragments of song, stray waifs of poetry,
The orphans of dead dreams, more sweet than aught
Won by decisive days of sober thought.

Day-dreams that feed the folly of the fool,
The wisdom of the wise, the hour endears;
Despite the discipline of life's stern school,
And the gray quiet of monastic years,
I sit, companioned by life's young desires,
And warm my fancies at yon sunset fires.

For 't is the children's hour, and I, the child,
Self-credulous, am pleased myself to tell
Stories that have no ending, ventures wild
O'er chartless oceans to glad isles where dwell
Loves that no bitter debt to time shall pay,
Loves that to-morrow shall be as to-day.

Ay, 't is enchantment's hour. A herald star
Marshals the silent armies of the night.

The eastward scarlet frets the waves. Afar
Fades in the pallid west a violet light,
And murmurs of the tide rise up to me,
Huge breathing of the sea's immensity.

* * *

Among the hills I know a dreaming lake
No wind disturbs, and drowsily it seems
The pictured stillness to itself to take.
All day it sleeps, and then at evening dreams
Brown twilight shadows,—till it dreams at dark
A silver dream, the pale moon's crescent bark.

* * *

There is a hill-crest where the dwarfish forms
Of crippled pines a scant subsistence win:

Gnarled by long battle with the winter storms,
Scarred cousins of their stately forest kin,
Whence came the force that waged victorious
 strife

For the mere hold upon their meagre life?

Companionable folk are they ; at ease
Upon the rocks their wooden elbows rest.
Something they hint of ancient pleasantries ;
Grim burgher soldiers they, who take with zest
Their pension of the sunshine, half aware
Of one with right their lazing life to share.

* * *

As wearily the mountain crest I gain,
Mysterious vigor feels the freshened mind,

And wide horizons gladden eye and brain.
Serenely confident I wait to find
Thoughts that no clouded hours knew to guess
Float upward to the light of consciousness.

Here truth the certainty of instinct feels,
When joy akin to awe the soul acquires,
And beauty, God's interpreter, reveals
Something of Him no meaner hour inspires.
Help Thou my unbelief, that I may be
By Nature's mother-hand led near to Thee.

Once, all there was of beauty on the earth
Became religion. Love was but a prayer
To gentle deities, whose sylvan mirth
Heard man or maid, at dusk of eve, aware

Of gods who shared love's piety, and of faint
Sweet whispers from some pagan flower saint.

If these were dreams, I envy those who dreamed
Into the world long dramas of belief,
This joyous passion-play of gods who seemed
To be so near to human joy and grief;
Or were they tender yearnings willed by Him
Whose creed left lonely all the woodways dim?

If I have lost this heritage divine,
Some pentecostal hour may give to me
The tongues earth's childhood knew, and it be mine
To read beyond what seems reality.
Grant me this gift of wisdom's fullest flower,
O fair Egeria of the evening hour.

Lo, in the twilight's dim confessional
Come aged voices from this ice-scarred rock;
I hear the avalanche in thunder fall,
The glacier's many voices, and the shock
When from these granite shoulders, seaward
 hurled,
Fell the white ruin of an elder world.

* * *

My summer friends, the maples, slowly shed
Their red and gold, are bare and gaunt and
 gray.
In changeless quiet, towering overhead,
Hemlock and pine defy the autumn's sway,
The wintry winds. To them the birds shall bring
A gracious autumn at the call of spring.

If time might hold for us no sad surprise
Of autumn's mournful change, what joy it were,
Earth-fed, deep-rooted, year by year to rise
Where thought uplifted breathes serener air,
And at life's ripest, of a summer day
To feel the lightning fall and pass away.

* * *

Among these rifted rocks creep stealthily
Faint dusking shadows, and the forest air
Stirs when the topmost leaves, uneasily,
A moment shiver in the winds that bear
Hoarse murmurs from the unrepentant deep;
Like one who mutters of far deaths in sleep.

A strange supremacy of quietness
Awaits the thoughtful where, in wreckage vast,

These riven rocks old agonies confess,
The half-told story of a dateless past ;
Prophetic dooms of change the soul oppress,
And some chill sense of ancient loneliness.

Why in this scene my truant footsteps found
Should come to me the urgent thought of death ?
For when this ruin fell, the barren ground
Knew naught of life, nor any mortal breath.
Yet generous of color are to-day
These moss-clad rocks, with fern and lichen gay.

Alas, vain thought ! Death's royal loneliness
Still bids the voice of love its silence share,
Where, in that land of grief companionless,
Familiar things a far remoteness wear,

And futile thoughts, like yearning tendrils, find
No hold secure, and hope and faith are blind.

Yet Nature stands, a finger on her lips,
Glad mother of mysterious sympathy,
Sure as the light that through the greenery
 slips,
Far-winged at eve with loving certainty,
To gild these glooming rocks, by glaciers worn,
With constant promise of another morn.

If Nature, soulless, knows not how to weep,
Take that she has for thee. Wilt know how
 much?

Bring here thy cares, and find upon the steep
Some kingly healing in the wild wind's touch.

The best of love and life is mystery,—
Take thou the pine-trees' benedicite!

* * *

The years that come as friend and leave as foe,
The years that come as foes, and friends depart,
Leave for remembrance more of joy than woe,
All memory sifting with Time's gentle art,
Till He who guides the swallow's wintry wing
Gives to our grief-winged love as sure a spring.

The mountain summit brings no bitter thought;
And in my glad surrender to its power,
Familiar spirits come to me unsought,
But unto thee, my child, the twilight hour,
When level sun-shafts of the waning day
Their girdling gold upon the forest lay.

Here, long ago, we talked or silent knew
The woodland awe of things about to be,
And, as the nearing shadows round us drew,
Some growing sense of unreality,
Ancestral pagan moods of far descent
That thronged the peopled woods with wonderment.

Art with me now, and this thy gentle hand?
Or is it that love's yearning love deceives,
And in too real a solitude I stand,
Hearing no footfall in the rustling leaves,
Sole comrade of far sorrows, left alone
The awakened memory of a dream to own?

Slow fades the light of day's most solemn hour.
The autumn leaves are drifting overhead.

In vain I yearn for some compelling power
To keep for me these ever-living dead.
Peace, peace, sad heart ; for thee a gentle breeze,
God's angelus, is sighing in the trees.

BAR HARBOR,
September, 1906.

ODE ON A LYCIAN TOMB¹

I

WHAT gracious nunnery of grief is here!
One woman garbed in sorrow's every mood;
Each sad presentment celled apart, in fear
Lest that herself upon herself intrude
And break some tender dream of sorrow's day,
Here cloistered lonely, set in marble gray.

O pale procession of immortal love,
Forever married to immortal grief!

¹ On this famous monument, known as "Les Pleureuses," and now in the museum at Constantinople, one and the same woman is carved in many attitudes of grief. These eighteen figures stand niched between Ionic columns. On the sarcophagus, above and below, are scenes of battle and the chase in bas-relief.

All of life's childlike sorrow far above,
Past help of time's compassionate relief :
These changeless stones are treasuries of
 regret,
And mock the term by time for sorrow set.

Ah me ! what tired hearts have hither come
To weep with thee, and give thy grief a voice !
And such as have not added to life's sum
The count of loss, they who do still rejoice
In love which time yet leaveth unassailed,
Here tremble, by prophetic sadness paled.

Thou who hast wept for many, weep for me,
For surely I, who deepest grief have known,
Share thy stilled sadness, which must ever be

Too changeless, and unending like my own,
Since thine is woe that knows not time's release,
And sorrow that can never compass peace.

He, too, who wrought this antique poetry,
Which wakes sad rhythms in the mourning
heart,

Must oft with thee have wondered silently,
Touched by the strange revealments of his art,
When at thy side he watched his chisel's grace
Foretell what time would carve upon thy face.

If to thy yearning silence, which in vain
Suggests its speechless plea in marbles old,
We add the anguish of an equal pain,
Shall not the sorrow of these statues cold

Inherit memories of our tears, and keep
Record of dear ones long in death asleep?

Ah me! in death asleep; how pitiful,
If in that timeless time the soul should wake,
To wander heart-blind where no years may dull
Remembrance, with a heart forbid to break.—
Dove of my home, that fled life's stranded ark,
The sea of death is shelterless and dark.

Cold mourner set in stone so long ago,
Too much my thoughts have dwelt with thee apart.
Again my grief is young; full well I know
The pang reborn, that mocked my feeble art
With that too human wail in pain expressed—
The parent cry above the empty nest!

II

Fair worshiper of many gods, whom I
In one God worship, very surely He
Will for thy tears and mine have some reply
When death assumes the trust of life, and we
Hear once again the voices of our dead,
And on a newer earth contented tread.

Doubtless for thee thy Lycian fields were sweet,
Thy dream of heaven no wiser than my own;
Nature and love, the sound of children's feet,
Home, husband, friends—what better hast thou
known?

What of the gods could ask thy longing prayer
Except again this earth and love to share?

For all in vain, with vexed imaginings,
We build of dreams another earth than ours,
And high in thought's thinned atmosphere, with
wings

That helpless beat, and mock our futile powers,
Falter and flutter, seeing naught above,
And naught below except the earth we love.

Enough it were to find our own old earth
With death's dark riddle answered, and
unspoiled

By fear, or sin, or pain; where joy and mirth
Have no sad shadows, and love is not foiled,
And where, companioned by the mighty dead,
The dateless books of time and fate are read.

III

What stately melancholy doth possess
This innocent marble with eternal doom!
What most imperious grief doth here oppress
The one sad soul which haunts this peopled tomb
In many forms that all these years have worn
One thought, for time's long comment more
forlorn!

Lo! grief, through love instinct with silentness,
Reluctant, in these marbles eloquent,
The ancient tale of loss doth here confess,
The first confusing, mad bewilderment,
Life's unbelief in death, in love forespent,
Thought without issue, childlike discontent.

Time, that for thee awhile did moveless seem,
Again his glass hath turned : I see thee stand
Thought-netted, or like one who in a dream
Self-wildered, in some alien forest land
Lone-wandering, in endless mazes lost,
Wearily stumbles over tracks recrossed.

Oft didst thou come in after days to leave
Roses and laurel on thy warrior's grave,
And with thy marble self again to grieve,
Glad of what genius unto sorrow gave,
Interpreting what had been and would be,
Love, tears, despair, attained serenity.

There are whom sorrow leaves full-wrecked. The
 great
Grow in the urgent anguish of defeat,

And with mysterious confidence await
The silent coming of the bearer's feet ;
Wherefore this quiet face so proudly set
To front life's duties, but naught to forget.

For life is but a tender instrument
Whereon the master hand of grief doth fall,
Leaving love's vibrant tissue resonant
With echoes, ever waking at the call
Of every kindred tone : so grief doth change
The instrument o'er which his fateful fingers
range.

BAR HARBOR, 1900.

AN ODE OF BATTLES¹

LONG ages past
The slow ice sledges bore
These alien rocks from some far other shore ;
Gray witnesses of power
In some prophetic hour
Dropped on the glacier's bed,
Strange burial-stones, to find at last
Their long-awaited dead.

Here, as if to mock regret,
Has careless nature set
The wild rose and the violet ;

¹ Gettysburg and Santiago.

For what to her is battle's iron lot?
She has no memory of a day
When man had ceased to slay,
And by her strife his war is infant play;
Yet here the frail forget-me-not
Entreats remembrance of what death may
 gain:

For not in vain
Upon this lone hillside
Uncounted hopes have died;
And not in vain
The lordship of the soul
In that wild strife
Asked an heroic dole,
The tribute gift of life,
While homes long held in bondage of their fears

Heard what they too had spent and wailed in
tears,—

The loss of youth's young love and manhood's
remnant years.

Weep for thy many dead,

O Northland, weep!

Even for thy triumph weep!

Here too our brothers sleep;

Not we alone have bled.

Tears! tears for those who lost!

For bitter was the cost

When that ripe manhood at its flood

Ebbd away in blood.

Yet who beneath the shrouded sun

Upon yon battle-wearied plain

Could know they too had won,
And had not died in vain?

Gone the days of lingering hate!
Came at last a happier fate
That welded state to state,
When along the island shore
We together stood once more,
And the levin blight and thunder
Were strange echoes of a day
When Spain's galleons went under.
Or, death-hunted, fled away,
While the sturdy gales that keep
Guard o'er England, beach and steep,
Sped the billows from afar,
Leaping hounds of the sea's wild war,

And set them on the track
Where, o'er ruin and o'er wrack,
Shrouding all
Fell the fog's gray funeral pall,
And the sea-greed took its toll
Of the pride of Philip's soul.

Hark and hear, ye admirals dead!
Comrades of the burly deep,
Whatsoever decks ye tread,
Wheresoever watch ye keep,—
Hark! the channel surges still
Roll o'er wrecks ye left to bide
The master might of the sea's stern will,
Scourge of storm and stress of tide:
When upon the Spaniard's flight

Closed in shame the northern night,
Not yours alone the count of sorrow
Ye left to some avenging morrow :
Far-sown islands west and east,
Thro' one long revel of misrule,
Reign of tyrant, knave, or fool,—
Cursed too the bigot and the priest.
From their days of bitter need,
From the sea-lords of our breed,
To the patience of the strong
Fell that heritage of wrong.
Rest in peace, ye captains bold :
When the tide of battle rolled
Thunderous on the island shore,
To thy children's hand the Lord
Gave for judgment doom the sword.

And at last forevermore
On those haunted Cuban coasts
That long-gathering debt was paid
And the sad and silent ghosts
Of unnumbered wrongs were laid.

Awake, sad Island Sister! Wake to be
The glad young child of liberty.
The storm of battle wholesomely
Has swept thy borders free.
Ringed with the azure of the Carib Sea,
No more the joy of thy abounding waves
Shall mock a land of slaves.

And lo! the matchless prize,
Great kingdoms craved with eager eyes,

Was ours blood-bought.
With no base afterthought
We left unransomed and complete
Earth's richest jewel at fair Freedom's feet ;
Her dream of hope a glad reality ;
Our share a memory !
Ah, never since the lightning of gray war
In other lands afar
Dismembered nations smote, and justice slept
While greed her plunder kept,
Has conquest left no shame
Upon the victor's name ;
But here at last from war's sad field
Proud honor bore a stainless shield,
And o'er our silent dead the air
Throbbled with Freedom's answered prayer.

THE SONG OF THE CAPTURED CONFEDERATE BATTLE-FLAGS

BY A UNANIMOUS VOTE OF CONGRESS RETURNED
TO THE STATES OF THE CONFEDERACY

WE loved the wild clamor of battle,
The crash of the musketry's rattle,
The bugle and drum.

We have drooped in the dust, long and lonely;
The blades that flashed joy are rust only,
The far-rolling war music dumb.

God rest the true souls in death lying,
For whom overhead proudly flying
We challenged the foe.

The storm of the charge we have breasted,

On the hearts of our dead we have rested,
In the pride of a day long ago.

Ah, surely the good of God's making
Shall answer both those past awaking
And life's cry of pain;
But we nevermore shall be tossing
On surges of battle where crossing
The swift-flying death-bearers rain.

Again in the wind we are streaming,
Again with the war lust are dreaming
The call of the shell.
What gray heads look up at us sadly?
Are these the stern troopers who madly
Rode straight at the battery's hell?

Nay, more than the living have found us,
Pale spectres of battle surround us ;

 The gray line is dressed.

Ye hear not, but they who are bringing
Your symbols of honor are singing
 The song of death's bivouac rest.

Blow forth on the south wind to greet us,
O star flag, once eager to meet us

 When war lines were set.

Go carry to far fields of glory
The soul-stirring thrill of the story
 Of days when in anger we met.

Ah, well that we hung in the churches
In quiet, where God the heart searches ;

That, under us met,
Men heard through the murmur of praying
The voice of the torn banners saying,
“Forgive, but ah ! never forget !”

THE PURE OF HEART

GENNESARET

O'ER my head the starry legions marched upon
their trackless way ;
Far below, Gennesaret's waters, silent, in the
moonlight lay,
And the Orient, brooding mother of all creeds
that men hold dear,
Cast her mystic spell upon me, and I murmured,
"Was it here?"

Was it here a man, a peasant, strange ambassador
of God,
Called to hear His stately message those sad
children of the sod;
Sowed for them hope's boundless harvest,
lavished for those shepherds rude
All that wonder-wealth of promise, each divine
beatitude?
Marveling, my thought I carried into sleep, and
if the earth
Breathed some memory of the legend, or in
dreams it had its birth,
Who may say? I tell the story as it came to me
at night,
From the underworld of slumber, from the
inner world of light.

On the hilltop, in the twilight, grave and still the

Master lay,

While the westward summits crimsoned, lustrous

in the dying day.

What had I to learn, a rabbi, schooled and

lessoned in the law?

Half in doubt and half in wonder, there apart I

stood, and saw

How some gentle impulse moved Him, and there

came upon His face,

With the final gold of sunset, other light, of joy

and grace,

While the mountains cast their shadows, slowly

cloaking all the hill

Where the multitude in silence waited on the

Master's will;

For His features stirred, uplifted as with
thought upon the wing,
Stirred as stirs the great earth-mother when she
feels her child the spring.
Wistfully men bided, longing for the voice their
eyes entreat,
Forward bent, hands locked, and quiet, till He
rose upon His feet.
And He gave as none has given through the long
and weary years,
Blessings that have lightened labor, promises
that answer tears.
When at last the white-clad peasants slowly
from the hill withdrew,
Long I lingered, why I knew not, till at last I
surely knew

That my soul some yearning counseled, bidding
me remain. I stayed,
Bolder for the dark, then heard Him: "Rabbi,
ask. Be not afraid."

Low I questioned: "Lord and Master, who most
surely are the pure?

Is it they who, born and dying, have no sorrow
to endure,

Like the snow that melts at morning, from the
soil of earth secure?

Who is it shall see . . . ?" But spoke not that
one word is left unsaid

When the priest intones the psalmist, and the
sacred scrolls are read.

"Who is it shall dare behold Him, and the
Nameless One abide,

When the seraphs' wings are folded, and the
angel hosts divide?"

Then I felt how great my daring, and my
forehead flushed with shame ;

Like a child in fear I waited, waited for the
word of blame.

But He said, "Draw near, O Rabbi," and those
strange eyes fell on mine,

And I knew that not in folly I had sought what
none divine.

Touching heart and lips and forehead, as when
one salutes a friend,

Low I bent, assured and silent, waiting what
His heart would send.

"See, O Rabbi," and a gesture summoned with
the lifted hand ;

Lo, a mighty wind, arising, drave across the
wakened land,
Swept Gennesaret's startled waters, beat across
the billowed grain,
Waking from its evening quiet, far below, the
dreaming plain,
While the gnarled and aged olives wildly
swayed above my head,
Heavy with the summer fruitage wherewithal a
man is fed,
Rich with oil that feeds the lamps that keep
remembrance of the dead.
And, behold, the wind He summoned for His
parable, at will,
Gone as flies a bird, and stillness fell upon the
lonely hill.

“Thou art learned in all our learning. Once at

Nazareth I saw

How men listened to Thy teaching, ‘Come and
read My higher law.’ ”

“Rabbi, Rabbi, sweet at evening are the lilies
bending low ;

Was it prayer they breathed, when rising from
their dewy overflow ?”

Wondering, I answered : “Master, who may
know ? But pure and sweet

Are they to the desert weary, freshness to the
sand-hot feet.”

For I guessed where now He led me, and with
thought that swift forewent,

As if spirit spake to spirit, glad at heart, I stood
intent.

“Lo,” He said, “behold the olives failing with the
summer heat,

Guarding still their precious harvest, though the
mad wind on them beat.”

“Yea,” I cried. “Oh, surely, Master, strong are
they, yet pure and sweet.”

For I guessed the fuller meaning of His speech,
as one foreknows

When on Lebanon the rose-light prophet of the
dawning glows.

And I said: “Not they are purest who, in hermit
trance of prayer,

Bide untempted in the desert, sinless as Thy
lilies were;

More there be who share Thy promise, more for
whom this hope has smiled:

They the burdened, they the weary, they who
 ever, unbeguiled,
Through the home, the street, the market, bear
 the white heart of the child."
Lingering, I heard His answer: "Go in peace."
 I moved away,
While afar the westward summits slowly turned
 from gold to gray.

BAR HARBOR,
October, 1904.

LINES GIVEN TO M. AT
CHRISTMAS

WITH A GIFT OF THE VIRGIN OF LUINI

WHAT shall I give thee, dear, to-day,
 Upon this sacred Christmas morn,
That tells us of the gift of love
 God gave when Christ was born,

And hope became a seraph winged
 With timeless dreams, and love elate
Saw with young eyes another world
 Where love's lost angels wait?

Ah, small were any richest gift
Without such love as thro' the years
Was sweeter for the hour of joy
And nobler for the day of tears.

Take, then, with love this gentle face
That had a more than human share
Of joy and grief, and haply, too,
Through the long years of sorrow bore

In that gray village of the hills
The sense of some diviner loss
Than death deals out, and evermore
The anguish of the lifted cross.

1905.

TO THE FORGET-ME-NOTS

ON THE PASS OF THE MAIDEN, JAPAN

Lo! Fujiyama's snowy cone
The green horizon bounds,
And Miajimi's sacred isle,
And Buddha's temple grounds.

Ah, once again thy voice is heard;
Again we keep our tryst,
As when upon the Switzer's hill
I stood amid the mist.

Within the garden's ordered walks
Thy name alone I hear,
And miss the gentle voice that calls
When none but I am near.

But where the mountain summits rise
Is ever sacred sod,
And here thy timid counsel breathes
A deep appeal to God.

Ah, least of all the many flowers
That on my path are set,
Read me thy Sermon on the Mount:
What should I not forget?

“Forget me not.” How simple seems
The counsel shyly given!

Let each interpret for himself
This voice of earth and heaven.

Ah! once on Albula's gray pass
I prayed that I might get,
With foresight of a darker day,
The sad leave to forget;

Nor knew, alas! how soon would come
Sore need to urge my prayer.
Ah, tender maidens of the hill
That constant sorrow share.

Forget? Ah, yes! the living fade
From memory, not the dead.
Thine are their voices as to-day
These alien hills I tread.

Tokio.

PRAYER

WHEN the day is growing old
And the stars their vigils keep,
Lo, a gentle voice within
Calling to the fold of sleep.

Whither, thither, know I not :
His the silence, His the care,
When my soul is called to rest,
Shepherded by quiet prayer.

THE ANGELS OF PRAYER

YE to whom my prayer is given,
Gentle couriers of heaven,
Sailing through the world of space
'Neath the sun of Mary's face,
To the joy of Mary's grace,
Let it seem a little child,
Such as came when Jesu smiled.

LULLABY

HOLY MOTHER! Holy Mother!

In the dark I fear.

Light me with thy shining eyes,

Be thou ever near.

Holy Mother! Holy Mother!

Call thy little Son,

Bid Him bring me praying dreams

Ere the night be done.

Call the angels, call them early,

Bid them fly to thee,

One to call the little birds,

One to waken me.

FRIENDSHIP

No wail of grief can equal answer win :

Love's faltering echo may but ill express

The grief for grief, nor more than faintly mock

The primal cry of some too vast distress.

Or is it for fair company of joy

We ask an equal echo from the heart?

A certain loneliness is ever ours,

And friendship mourns her still imperfect art.

1908.

LOVE

“For I have always loved you for many reasons and in many ways.”—P. B.

THE daily tribute of the sun

Lives on, in tree, and fruit, and flower ;

Lives on, with subtle change of power,

When the last hour of day is done.

And what the kindly sun has given,

Reborn in many a varied form,

Is in the wind, the sea, the storm,

And when the lightning flames through heaven,

And is itself again ; and so
Through many ways of diverse change
Has love equality of range,
And back again as love may flow ;

For deathless, as God's sunlight still,
Its tender ministry renewed
In each divine beatitude,
Shall love its purposes fulfil.

INNOGEN

A stage direction in the old copies of "Much Ado about Nothing" is: "Enter Leonato, Governour of Messina, *Innogen* his wife, Hero his daughter, and Beatrice his niece, and a messenger." As the wife of Leonato takes no part in the action, and neither speaks nor is spoken to throughout the play, she was probably no more than a character the poet had designed in his first sketch of the plot, and which he found reason to omit afterward.

IMMORTAL shadow, faint and ever fair,

Dear for unspoken words that might have been,
Compelled to silent sorrow none may share,

A ghost of Shakespeare's world, unheard, unseen,
How many more like thee have voiceless stood

Uncalled upon the threshold of his mind,
The speechless children of a mighty brood

Who were and are not! Never shall they find
The happier comrades unto whom he gave

Thought, speech, and action—they who shall
not know

The end of our realities, the grave,

Nor what is sadder, life, nor any human woe.

INDIAN SUMMER

THE stillness that doth wait on change is here,
Some pause of expectation owns the hour;
And faint and far I hear the sea complain
Where gray and answerless the headlands
tower.

Slow fails the evening of the dying year,
Misty and dim the waiting forests lie,
Chill ocean winds the wasted woodland
grieve,
And earthward loitering the leaves go by.

Behold how nature answers death! O'erhead
The memoried splendor of her summer eves
Lavished and lost, her wealth of sun and sky,
Scarlet and gold, are in her drifting leaves.

Vain pageantry! for this, alas, is death,
Nor may the seasons' ripe fulfilment cheat
My thronging memories of those who died
With life's young summer promise
incomplete.

The dead leaves rustle 'neath my lingering
tread.

Low murmuring ever to the spirit ear:
We were, and yet again shall be once more,
In the sure circuits of the rolling year.

Trust thou the craft of nature. Lo! for thee
A comrade wise she moves, serenely sweet,
With wilful prescience mocking sense of loss
For us who mourn love's unreturning feet.

Trust thou her wisdom, she will reconcile
The faltering spirit to eternal change
When, in her fading woodways, thou shalt
touch
Dear hands long dead and know them not as
strange.

For thee a golden parable she breathes
Where in the mystery of this repose,
While death is dreaming life, the waning wood
With far-caught light of heaven divinely glows.

Thou, when the final loneliness draws near,
And earth to earth recalls her tired child,
In the sweet constancy of nature strong
Shalt dream again—how dying nature smiled.

BAR HARBOR, 1900.

THE SEA-GULL

I

THE woods are full of merry minstrelsy;
Glad are the hedges with the notes of spring;
But o'er the sad and uncompanioned sea
No love-born voices ring.

II

Gray mariner of every ocean clime,
If I could wander on as sure a wing,
Or beat with yellow web thy pathless sea,
I too might cease to sing.

III

Would I could share thy silver-flashing swoop,
Thy steady poise above the bounding deep,
Or buoyant float with thine instinctive trust,
Rocked in a dreamless sleep.

IV

Thine is the heritage of simple things,
The untasked liberty of sea and air,
Some tender yearning for the peopled nest,
Thy only freight of care.

V

Thou hast no forecast of the morrow's need,
No bitter memory of yesterdays;

Nor stirs thy thought that airy sea o'erhead,
Nor ocean's soundless ways.

VI

Thou silent raider of the abounding sea,
Intent and resolute, ah, who may guess
What primal notes of gladness thou hast lost
In this vast loneliness!

VII

Where bides thy mate? On some lorn ocean rock
Seaward she watches. Hark! the one
shrill cry,
Strident and harsh, across the wave shall be
Her welcome—thy reply.

VIII

When first thy sires, with joy-discovered flight,
High on exultant pinions sped afar,
Had they no cry of gladness or of love,
No bugle note of war?

IX

What gallant song their happy treasury held,
Such as the pleasant woodland folk employ,
The lone sea thunder quelled. Thou hast one note
For love, for hate, for joy.

X

Yet who that hears this stormy ocean voice
Would not, like them, at last be hushed and stilled,

Were all his days through endless ages past
With this stern music filled?

XI

What matters it? Ah! not alone are loved
Leaf-cloistered poets who can love in song.
Home to the wild-eyed! Home! She will not miss
The music lost so long.

XII

Home! for the night wind signals, "Get thee home";
Home, hardy admiral of the rolling deep;
Home from the foray! Home! That silenced song
Love's endless echoes keep.

BAR HARBOR, 1897.

TO A MAGNOLIA FLOWER

IN THE GARDEN OF THE ARMENIAN CONVENT
AT VENICE

I SAW thy beauty in its high estate
Of perfect empire, where at set of sun
In the cool twilight of thy lucent leaves
The dewy freshness told that day was done.

Hast thou no gift beyond thine ivory cone's
Surpassing loveliness? Art thou not near—
More near than we—to nature's silentness:
Is it not voiceful to thy finer ear?

Thy folded secrecy doth like a charm

Compel to thought. What spring-born
yearning lies

Within the quiet of thy stainless breast,

That doth with languorous passion seem to rise?

The soul doth truant angels entertain

Who with reluctant joy their thoughts
confess :

Low-breathing, to these sister spirits give

The virgin mysteries of thy heart to guess.

What whispers hast thou from yon childlike sea

That sobs all night beside these garden walls?

Canst thou interpret what the lark hath sung

When from the choir of heaven her music falls?

If for companionship of purity

The equal pallor of the risen moon

Disturb thy dreams, dost know to read aright

Her silver tracery on the dark lagoon?

The mischief-making fruitfulness of May

Stirs all the garden folk with vague desires.

Doth there not reach thine apprehensive ear

The faded longing of these dark-robed friars,

When, in the evening hour to memories given,

Some gray-haired man amid the gathering
gloom

For one delirious moment sees again

The gleam of eyes and white-walled

Erzeroum?

Hast thou not loved him for this human dream?

Or sighed with him who yester-evening sat
Upon the low sea-wall, and saw through tears
His ruined home and snow-clad Ararat?

If thou art dowered with some refined sense
That shares the counsels of the nesting
bird,

Canst hear the mighty laughter of the earth,
And all that ear of man hath never heard?

If the abysmal stillness of the night

Be eloquent for thee, if thou canst read
The glowing rubric of the morning song,
Doth each new day no gentle warning
breed?

Shall not the gossip of the maudlin bee,
The fragrant history of the fallen rose,
Unto the prescience of instinctive love
Some humbler prophecy of joy disclose?

Cold vestal of the leafy convent-cell,
The traitor days have thy calm trust
betrayed;
The sea-wind boldly parts thy shining
leaves
To let the angel in. Be not afraid!

The gold-winged sun, divinely penetrant,
The pure annunciation of the morn
Breathes o'er thy chastity, and to thy soul
The tender thrill of motherhood is borne.

Set wide the glory of thy radiant bloom!

Call every wind to share thy scented breaths!

No life is brief that doth perfection win.

To-day is thine—to-morrow thou art death's!

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO,

July, 1897.

JEKYL ISLAND

EBB-TIDE

FADING light on a lonely beach,
A slow out-creeping tide
That leaves to me on sea-etched sands
The ocean's cryptic speech.

Adown the ever broadening strand
Moon-witched waters steal,
And over the dunes a wild wind swoops
And frets the silted sand.

STORM-WAVES AND FOG ON DORR'S
POINT, BAR HARBOR

THE fog's gray curtain round me draws,
And leaves no world to me
Save this swift drama of the stirred
And restless sea.

Forth of the shrouding fog they roll,
As from a viewless world,
Leap spectral white, and, pausing, break,
In thunder hurled.

Ever they climb and cling anew,
 Slide from the smooth rock wall,
 With thin white fingers grip the weeds
 And seaward crawl.

In rhythmic rote o'er shivering sands
 They glide adown the shore
 With murmurous whispering of "Hush!"
 And then no more.

1907.

THE BIRTHDAY OF WASHINGTON

1900

REMEMBERING him we praise to-day,

Hushed is the mighty roar of trade,

And, pausing on its ardent way,

A nation's homage here is paid.

Upon the great Virginian's grave

Look down the new-born century's eyes,

Where by his loved Potomac wave

In God's long rest His soldier lies.

A hundred years have naught revealed

To blot this manhood's record high,

'That blazoned duty's stainless shield

And set a star in honor's sky.'

In self-approval firm, his life
Serenely passed through darkest days;
In calm or storm, in peace or strife,
Unmoved by blame, unstirred by praise.

No warrior pride disturbed his peace,
Nor place nor gain. He loved his fields,
His home, the chase, his land's increase,
The simple life that nature yields.

And yet for us all man could give
He gave, with that which never dies,
The gift through which great nations live,
The lifelong gift of sacrifice.

With true humility he learned
The game of war, the art of rule;

And, calmly patient, slowly earned
His competence in life's large school.

Well may we honor him who sought
To live with one unfailing aim,
And found at last, unasked, unsought,
In duty's path, the jewel, fame!

And He who girded him with power,
And gave him strength to do the right,
Will ask of us, in some stern hour,
"How have *ye* used the gift of might?"

Since, till this harried earth shall gain
The heaven of Thy peace, O Lord!
Freedom and Law will need to reign
Beneath the shadow of the sword.

FLORENCE¹

APRIL FIRST

COME, let us be the willing fools
Of April's earliest day,
And dream we own all pleasant things
The years have reft away.

'T is but to take the poet's wand,
A touch or here or there,
And I have lost that ancient stoop,
And you are young and fair.

Ah, no! The years that gave and took
Have left with you and me
The wisdom of the widening stream;
Trust we the larger sea.

¹Except the last two lines, which I failed to capture, the rest of these verses I composed while asleep. I have many times seemed to make verses in sleep; only thrice could I recall them on waking. The four lines called "Which" were also made in sleep. The psychological interest of this sleep product may excuse this personal statement.

WHICH?

BIRTH-DAY or Earth-day,
Which the true mirth-day?
Earth-day or birth-day,
Which the well-worth day?

February 15, 1909.

BOOKS AND THE MAN¹

WHEN the years gather round us like stern foes
That give no quarter, and the ranks of love
Break here and there, untouched there still abide
Friends whom no adverse fate can wound or
move :

A deathless heritage, for these are they
Who neither fail nor falter ; we, alas !
Can hope no more of friendship than to fill
The mortal hour of earth and, mortal, pass.

¹ William Osler. Read to the Charaka Club, March 4, 1905.

Steadfast and generous, they greet us still
Through every fortune with unchanging
looks,
Unasked no counsel give, are silent folk ;
The careless-minded lightly call them books.

Of the proud peerage of the mind are they,
Fair, courteous gentlemen who wait our will
When come the lonely hours the scholar loves,
And glows the hearth and all the house is still.

Wilt choose for guest the good old doctor
knight,
Quaint, learned and odd, or very wisely shrewd,
Or with Dan Chaucer win a quiet hour
Far from our noisy century's alien mood?

Wilt sail great seas on rhythmic lyrics borne,
In the high company of gallant souls,
Where, ringed with stately death, proud Grenville
lies,
Or the far thunder of the Armada rolls?

Wilt call that English lad Fabricius taught
And Padua knew, and that heroic soul—
Our brave Vesalius? Long the list of
friends,
Far through the ages runs that shining roll.

How happy he who, native to their tongue,
A mystic language reads between the lines :
Gay, gallant fancies, songs unheard before,
Ripe with the worldless wisdom love divines ;

Rich with dumb records of long centuries past,
The viewless dreams of poet, scholar, sage;
What marginalia of unwritten thought
With glowing rubrics deck the splendid page!

Some ghostly presence haunts the lucid phrase
Where Bacon pondered o'er the words we scan.
Here grave Montaigne with cynic wisdom
played,
And lo, the book becomes for us a man!

Shall we not find more dear the happy page
Where Lamb, forgetting sorrow, loved to dwell,
Or that which won from Thackeray's face a
smile,
Or lit the gloom of Raleigh's prison cell?

And if this gentle company has made

The comrade heart to pain an easier prey,
They, too, were heirs of sorrow ; well they know
With what brave thoughts to charm thy cares
away.

And shouldst thou crave an hour's glad reprieve

From mortal cares that mock the mind's control,
For thee Cervantes laughs the world away !

What priest is wiser than our Shakespeare's
soul?

Show me his friends and I the man shall know ;

This wiser turn a larger wisdom lends :
Show me the books he loves and I shall know
The man far better than through mortal
friends.

Do you perchance recall when first we met,
And gaily winged with thought the flying
night,
And won with ease the friendship of the
mind?—

I like to call it friendship at first sight.

And then you found with us a second home,
And, in the practice of life's happiest art,
You little guessed how readily you won
The added friendship of the open heart.

And now a score of years has fled away
In noble service of life's highest ends,
And my glad capture of a London night
Disputes with me a continent of friends.

But you and I may claim an older date,
The fruitful amity of forty years,—
A score for me, a score for you, and so
How simple that arithmetic appears!

But are old friends the best? What age, I ask,
Must friendships own to earn the title old?
Shall none seem old save he who won or lost
When fists were up or ill-kept wickets
bowled?

Are none old friends who never blacked your
eyes?

Or with a shinny whacked the youthful shin?
Or knew the misery of the pliant birch?
Or, apple-tempted, shared in Adam's sin?

Grave Selden saith, and quotes the pedant King,
Old friends are best, and, like to well-worn
shoes,

The oldest are the easiest. Not for me!

The easy friend is not the friend I choose.

But if the oldest friends are best indeed,

I 'd have the proverb otherwise expressed—

Friends are not best because they 're merely old,

But only old because they proved the best.

TO ABRAHAM JACOBI, M.D.

AT THE DINNER GIVEN TO CELEBRATE HIS
SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY

No honors hath the State for you whose life
From youth to age has known one single end.
Take from our lips two well-won titles now,
Magister et Amicus—Master, Friend.

Here on the summit of attainment's peak,
Far from the rugged path you knew to climb,
Take, with our thanks for high example set,
The palm of honor in this festal time.

Constant and brave, in no ignoble cause
The hopes of freedom armed thy sturdy
youth;
As true and brave in these maturer years
Thy ardent struggle in the cause of truth.

Nor prison bars, nor yet the lonely cell,
Could break thy vigor of unconquered will;
And the gray years which build as cruel walls
Have found and left thee ever victor still.

Ave Magister! Take from us to-night
The well-earned praise of all who love our art
For this long season of unending work,
For strength of brain, and precious wealth of
heart.

Much gave your busy hand ; but, ah, far more,
The gallant life that taught men how to meet
Unfriended exile, sorrow, want, and all
That crush the weak with failure and defeat.

We gave you here a home ; you well have paid
With many gifts proud freedom's generous
hand
That bade you largely breathe a freer air,
And made you welcome to a freer land.

Ave Amice ! If around this board
Are they who watched you thro' laborious
years,
Beyond these walls, in many a grateful home,
Your step dismissed a thousand pallid fears.

That kindly face, that gravely tender look,
Thro' darkened hours how many a mother
knew !

And in that look won sweet reprieve of hope,
Sure that all earth could give was there with
you.

Ave Magister ! Many be the years
That lie before thee, thronged with busy hours !
Ave Amice ! Take our earnest prayer
That all their ways fair fortune strew with
flowers.

IN MEMORY OF
WILLIAM HENRY DRUMMOND

THE CANADIAN POET

PEACE to his poet soul. Full well he knew
To sing for those who know not how to praise
The woodsman's life, the farmer's patient toil,
The peaceful drama of laborious days.

He made his own the thoughts of simple men,
And with the touch that makes the world akin,
A welcome guest of lonely cabin homes,
Found, too, no heart he could not enter in.

The toil-worn doctor, women, children, men,
The humble heroes of the lumber drives,
Love, laugh, or weep along his peopled verse,
Blithe 'mid the pathos of their meagre lives.

While thus the poet-love interpreted,
He left us pictures no one may forget—
Courteau, Baptiste, Camille mon frère, and,
best,
The good, brave curé, he of Calumette.

With nature as with man at home, he loved
The silent forest and the birches' flight
Down the white peril of the rapids' rush,
And the cold glamour of the Northern
night.

Some mystery of genius haunts his page,

Some wonder-secret of the poet's spell

Died with this master of the peasant thought.

Peace to this Northland singer, and farewell!

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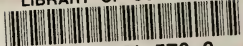


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